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# Report to the Provost from the Task Force to Review Dialogues on Diversity

Task Force to Review Dialogues on Diversity, Iowa State University

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# Report to the Provost from the Task Force to Review Dialogues on Diversity

## **Abstract**

One of the action items arising from the work of the Campus Climate Implementation Team and the President's Advisory Committee on Diversity was a request from the President to the Provost to review the Dialogues on Diversity course. The Provost instructed this Task Force to review the current Dialogues on Diversity course to determine how it should be continued for optimal impact and to determine whether it is appropriate to add a "Dialogues—Part 2" to the curriculum. The Provost's charge to the Task Force also asked for recommendations that include details on the following components of the current program:

- goals and objectives of the revised course
- administration and recommended department home for the revised course
- possibility of and need for a second course
- optimal coordination with other programs/initiatives on campus.

## **Disciplines**

Higher Education Administration

# Report to the Provost From the Task Force to Review Dialogues on Diversity

December 7, 2006

## **Task Force Membership**

**David Acker**, Associate Dean and Professor, Agricultural Education, College of Agriculture (Task Force Chair)

**Tunde Adeleke**, Director, African American Studies, and Professor, History, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

**Kathy Hickok**, Professor, English, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Interim Director of Women's Studies, and Professor in Charge of the Carver Academy

**Nancy Knight**, Director, Diversity and Graduate Student Affairs, College of Engineering

**Stephanie Madon**, Assistant Professor, Psychology, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

**Penny Rice**, Director, Margaret Sloss Women's Center

**Karen Zunkel**, Director, Program for Women in Science and Engineering, and Director, Undergraduate Support Services, Office of the Provost

**Carlie Tartakov**, Professor Emeritus, Curriculum and Instruction, College of Human Sciences (*ex-officio*)

# INTRODUCTION

## Provost's Charge to the Task Force

One of the action items arising from the work of the Campus Climate Implementation Team and the President's Advisory Committee on Diversity was a request from the President to the Provost to review the Dialogues on Diversity course. The Provost instructed this Task Force to review the current Dialogues on Diversity course to determine how it should be continued for optimal impact and to determine whether it is appropriate to add a "Dialogues—Part 2" to the curriculum. The Provost's charge to the Task Force also asked for recommendations that include details on the following components of the current program:

- goals and objectives of the revised course
- administration and recommended department home for the revised course
- possibility of and need for a second course
- optimal coordination with other programs/initiatives on campus.

## Process

The work of the Task Force began on September 5 when Interim Provost Susan Carlson attended the first meeting to present and discuss the charge. Subsequently, the Task Force met five times. Dr. Carlie Tartakov, Professor Emeritus, Curriculum and Instruction, who developed the course, participated in 3 meetings and was instrumental in providing a context for understanding the course and its objectives early in the review process. Dr. James McShay, Adjunct Assistant Professor, Curriculum and Instruction, who currently serves as instructor of record for the course, was invited to one meeting to discuss the current status of the course and his ideas for future offerings.

The methodology employed by the Task Force included a review of the curriculum and materials used in the current course, a review and analysis of two semesters of student course evaluation data provided by the course instructor, an individual meeting with Dr. McShay, and a review of a report provided by the Registrar.

This report presents observations and recommendations from the Task Force. The report is organized along the lines of the charge from the Provost as follows:

- Section I. Background on Dialogues on Diversity
- Section II. Continuation and Optimal Impact of the Revised Course
- Section III. Administration and Department Home
- Section IV. A Second Course
- Section V. Coordination with Other Programs on Campus

# **Section I: Background on Dialogues on Diversity**

## **Purpose**

Dialogues on Diversity (University Studies 150) explores issues of diversity within the Iowa State University community by increasing awareness of human relations issues.

## **Structure**

Dialogues on Diversity is a half-semester course that commences in the second half of the Fall and Spring semesters. An instructor and two graduate assistants coordinate the course and the its content. Trained facilitators lead each class meeting. The role of the facilitators is to promote the flow of communication, foster discussion, maintain respectful discourse, and create a safe environment for students to share their attitudes, feelings, and beliefs about diversity. Historically, there have been 4 facilitators per section. More recently, this number has been reduced to 2 facilitators per section. Each section meets for 1 hour and 50 minutes per week during which time students and facilitators role play, discuss case studies, and engage in group dialogues with respect to diversity issues. The course fosters introspection, active learning, and provides students with the skills to communicate their attitudes and beliefs about diversity to others in an open, honest, and appropriate manner. The course is offered on a satisfactory–fail basis only.

## **Goals and Objectives**

The following course goals and objectives were extracted from the syllabus for Dialogues on Diversity (U ST 150):

### *Course Goals:*

- *To explore diversity within the context of the Iowa State University campus.*
- *To help create a welcoming climate that values and appreciates diversity.*

### *Course Objectives:*

- *To promote warm, collegial relationships between people of diverse backgrounds.*
- *To engage in dialogue and open discussions about diversity-related issues.*
- *To foster the development of critical thinking skills and inter-cultural competence.*
- *To develop allies and change agents who can impact the campus climate for diversity.*

In September 2005, the Faculty Senate approved a listing of outcomes expected to be achieved through U.S. Diversity courses. A review of the curriculum for U ST 150 and discussions with course instructors revealed that the course objectives, as currently listed did not adequately reflect the true impact of U ST 150, nor how the course was meeting many of the outcomes desired by the Faculty Senate. Also, the existing objectives and goals provide a philosophical context for the course, but in many cases are not easily measurable.

### **Home Department**

Dialogues on Diversity has been a University Studies course since it was first offered in the Fall of 1994. The instructor of record (subsequently referred to as the instructor) has always been a tenure-track/tenured faculty or adjunct faculty member in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction.

### **Instructor**

From 1994 through Spring 2006, the instructor of record was Dr. Tartakov. Dr. McShay became the instructor of record in the Fall of 2006 and was continuing in this capacity at the time this report was written.

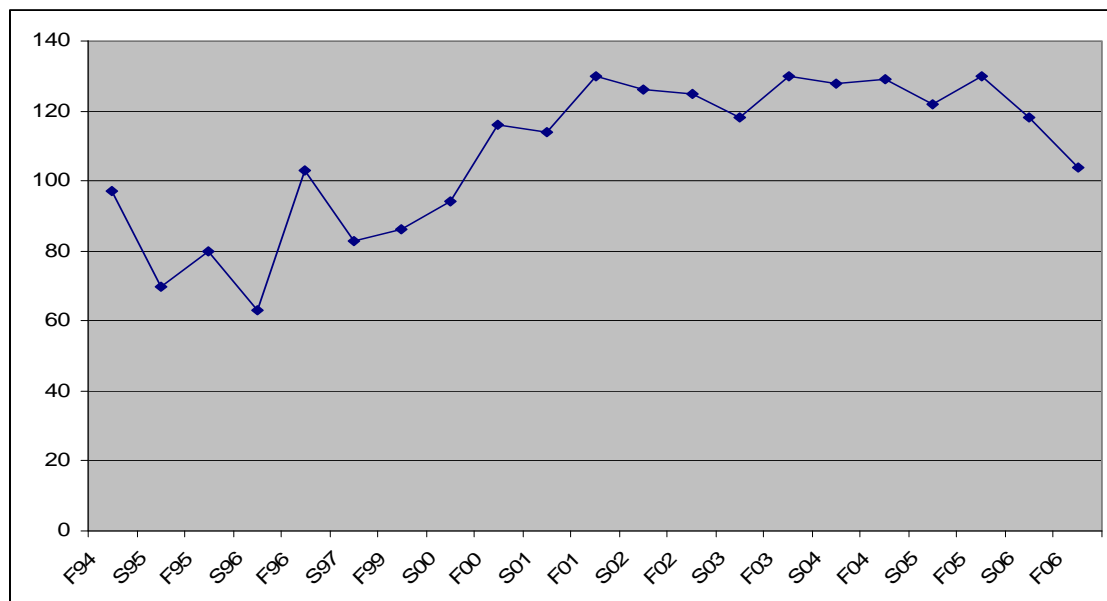
### **Enrollment Over Time**

Dialogues on Diversity has consisted of five sections each semester that it has been taught. Total enrollment across the five sections has ranged from 63 to 130 per semester (see Table 1 and Figure 1). Enrollment per section has ranged from 9 to 29 students. The upper bound of enrollment in each section is set by the instructor. Because of student demand, this upper bound has been increasingly raised and student enrollment has increased steadily over time. For example, in the Fall of 1994, student enrollment across the five sections was 97; that increased to 116 by Fall of 2000; and went as high as 130 in the Fall of 2005. During the Fall of 2006 sections were capped at 20 students (instead of 25) with a total of 104 students enrolled.

Table 1: Enrollment by semester in University Studies 150 Dialogues on Diversity

	Number of Sections	Total Enrollment
Fall 1994	5	97
Spring 1995	5	70
Fall 1995	5	80
Spring 1996	5	63
Fall 1996	5	103
Spring 1997	5	83
Fall 1999	5	86
Spring 2000	5	94
Fall 2000	5	116
Spring 2001	5	114
Fall 2001	5	130
Spring 2002	5	126
Fall 2002	5	125
Spring 2003	5	118
Fall 2003	5	130
Spring 2004	5	128
Fall 2004	5	129
Spring 2005	5	122
Fall 2005	5	130
Spring 2006	5	118
Fall 2006	5	104
Average		108

Figure 1: Enrollment by semester in University Studies 150 Dialogues on Diversity



**Note:** Enrollment was capped at 20 students per section in Fall 2006

## Evaluation of Course

Each semester students provided evaluative feedback about the course by responding to two sets of items. One set asked students to respond to the question: "How satisfied were you with the following components of Dialogues on Diversity: Facilitators, Quality of Program Content, Dialogue, Meeting Room, Meeting Time, and Overall Evaluation?" Students responded on a five-point scale with endpoints "poor" and "excellent". Table 2 presents students' ratings of these components for the most recent Spring semesters and shows that, overall, the majority of students rated the components very favorably.

Table 2: Student Responses on Level of Satisfaction for Dialogues on Diversity for Spring 2005 and Spring 2006

Category	Total	E's	E's %	G's	G's %	F's	F's %	P	P %
Facilitators	242	144	59.5%	79	32.6%	16	6.6%	3	1.2%
Quality of Program Content	242	98	40.5%	112	46.3%	26	10.7%	8	3.3%
Dialogue	242	105	43.4%	104	43.0%	26	10.7%	5	2.1%
Meeting Room	83	24	28.9%	28	33.7%	24	28.9%	7	8.4%
Meeting Time	83	31	37.3%	40	48.2%	10	12.0%	3	3.6%
Overall Evaluation	159	61	38.4%	81	50.9%	13	8.2%	4	2.5%

**Key: E = Excellent      G = Good      F = Fair      P = Poor**

The second set of items asked students to complete the following three statements:

- The most important thing I learned from Dialogues on Diversity is...  
(238 responses)
- The way that Dialogues could be improved is...  
(234 responses)
- The impact of my participation in Dialogues is/will be...  
(226 responses)

These data had not been analyzed by the instructors. However, the Task Force reviewed these raw data to identify changes suggested for the existing course and expressions of interest for an additional course. Although the course evaluations are very positive, some of the areas of concern expressed by students, facilitators, and the instructor may be attributed to inadequate financial support. Examples of concern include inadequate facilitator training, lack of coordination between facilitators, out dated materials, difficulty in recruiting volunteer facilitators, etc.



## **Section II: Continuation and Optimal Impact of the Revised Course**

### **Observation: Course is Achieving Objectives**

Based on interviews with the instructors, a review of the course syllabus and materials, and a review of student evaluation data, the Task Force reached consensus that Dialogues on Diversity is achieving its objectives and serves an important campus need.

### **Recommendation: Continue Course with Revised Objectives**

Dialogues on Diversity should be continued. However, the course can and should be revised. Course objectives for U ST 150 should be revised along the following lines proposed by Dr. James McShay:

- To develop a capacity for dialogue: active listening, suspending judgments, identifying assumptions, reflection and inquiry.
- To reflect upon and learn about self and others as members of social groups in the context of systems of privilege and oppression.
- To explore the similarities and differences in experiences across social group memberships.
- To identify individual and collective actions for interrupting injustices and building alliances to promote greater social justice.
- To gain awareness of the dynamics of difference and dominance at the personal and political levels.
- To develop skills to work with differences, disagreements and conflicts as opportunities for deeper understanding and transformation.

These objectives are more specific than the existing objectives and also map to the expected U.S. Diversity outcomes of the Faculty Senate more easily than the existing course objectives.

### **Observations: Budget for the Course**

Currently, Dialogues on Diversity receives support from the Provost's Office (\$34,744 in FY 07). This includes partial salary and benefits for a faculty member to coordinate the course (approximately 1/5 time), a ½-time graduate assistant and a ¼-time graduate assistant (salaries, benefits and tuition scholarships for 2 semesters) and a small amount of program materials support of \$3,500. The course facilitators, who actually lead the class sessions, are volunteers and receive no financial compensation.

### **Recommendation: Increased Funding for Existing U ST 150 course:**

Based on course demands, the number of student credit hours, and the complexities of facilitating this multi-section course the Task Force recommends that the budget for U ST 150 be increased in the following ways:

1. The salary and benefits buyout for the instructor should be raised to the equivalent of 50%, (B-Base) for the following reasons:
  - The Task Force is recommending that the number of sections of the course be increased each semester to better meet course demands.
  - Although the instructor does not have class contact hours/teaching for each section, the instructor is responsible for all curriculum preparation and coordination of teaching and assessment for this multi-section course.
  - The instructor is responsible for the training and supervision of facilitators for all sections of the course. The recommendations also include shifting the training into an academic course experience for graduate students, which will require extra time from the instructor.
  - This would also allow the instructor to work on the development of the Dialogues into Action 2-credit course (see Section IV).
2. There should be an increase in Graduate Assistant time from one  $\frac{1}{2}$  and one  $\frac{1}{4}$ -time graduate assistant to two  $\frac{1}{2}$ -time graduate assistants. The extra time would support and address some of the organizational concerns raised in students' evaluations.
3. The Task Force recommends that incentives be included in the budget to compensate for the training time and involvement of faculty and staff serving as facilitators. It is assumed that graduate student facilitators would be involved in the new training course and would receive academic credit. It is further assumed that faculty and staff will be more likely to participate and sustain their involvement if they are given a modest professional development stipend in the neighborhood of \$250/semester.

To accommodate all these financial needs, the Task Force recommends that the **total commitment for the course be raised to \$78,000/year.**

There are two additional budgetary considerations:

- 1) It is important to note that the new budget model could have serious implications for U ST courses and second half semester courses in general. It is important that the tuition dollars for students enrolled in

these courses are allocated to the department/unit responsible for teaching the courses. These tuition dollars could help off-set some of the \$78,000 commitment needed.

- 2) As part of the review of U ST 150, the Task Force uncovered that a parallel course U ST 160X receives no support (other than normal support for the Margaret Sloss Women's Center) from the Provost Office. As the Task Force is recommending a potential 'program' or 'complement of courses', it will be important to ensure that U ST 160X receives financial support similar to U ST 150 from the Provost Office in the future.

### **Observation: Limitations of Current Course**

Dialogues on Diversity has been offered to Iowa State students since Fall semester 1994. Each semester five sections of the course are offered. The past several years, demand for U ST 150 has exceeded the published capacity of 5 sections, 25 students per section. Feedback from advisors and the instructors indicate that the course is filled well before the deadline. Recently, the sections have filled beyond recommended enrollment of 20-25 students. Enrollment in individual sections has grown and the instructor has permitted additional students to enroll above the cap. The instructor speculates that there is additional unmet demand and the Task Force found this speculation credible.

Also, based on the feedback from the instructors, the section size of 25 is actually too large to effectively lead a discussion oriented course. If the number of students per section is reduced to 20 students, it would be reasonable to expect that up to eight sections of the course would be needed.

One argument for not creating additional sections or another course would be that there is not enough demand for this area of study. Although unmet demand data are no longer gathered by the current registration system it is possible to examine the case of the introduction of U ST 160X: Gender Justice which follows a similar mid-semester format as University Studies 150 and became available spring semester 2005. The addition of another course (second half of the semester, fulfilling one credit of US Diversity requirement) did not significantly impact enrollment in University Studies 150, and 160X fills beyond recommended enrollment of 20-25 students each semester. U ST 160X has enrolled an average of 138 students in each semester that it was offered. U ST 160X has been approved and will appear in the 2007-09 catalog as U ST 160.

Both University Studies 150 and 160X close enrollment two to three weeks prior to the beginning of the course with a significant number of students denied enrollment. Both courses provide students who find themselves needing to drop courses with midterm enrollment options to maintain full-time student status. This status is attached to financial aid and scholarship requirements.

**Recommendation: Increase the Number of Sections of U ST 150**

Based on projected demand the Task Force recommends that additional sections of U St 150 be added each semester to accommodate student demand.

**Observation: Preparation of Facilitators**

Good facilitation is key to the success of Dialogues on Diversity. Given the structure of the course, the importance of facilitators, and the constant turnover of facilitators there is a need to train each new facilitator. This observation was reinforced by the current instructor, by a former facilitator, and through student comments on course evaluation forms.

**Recommendation: Improve the Training for Facilitators**

Adequate training of each new facilitator is essential. There is a need for further consideration of the implementation approach for such training. One possibility is that the training of facilitators could be conducted prior to the start of the course (during the first half of the semester) possibly in the form of a graduate course called "Diversity Leadership" or something similar.

## **Section III: Administration and Department Home**

### **Observation: Course Home Needed**

The Task Force believes that the sustainability of the Dialogues on Diversity course will be enhanced if it migrates from its University Studies designation to a permanent place in the ISU curriculum. The most appropriate academic home for Dialogues on Diversity and the recommended 2-credit follow-up course would seem to be not a department *per se* but a College, by analogy with courses such as LAS 150: Society, Culture and Change in a Diverse Nation.

### **Recommendation: College of Human Sciences as Home for Course**

The Task Force recommends the College of Human Sciences as the appropriate home. The instructor for the Dialogues on Diversity course has always come from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction (C&I). Facilitators are drawn from faculty, staff and graduate students from across the campus. The graduate program in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Department has been and will be a source of facilitators for the course. It was a faculty member from this College – Dr. Tartakov – who originally designed, administered and taught the Dialogues on Diversity course. Currently, this role is being filled by Dr. McShay, also of C&I.

However, the Provost will need to seek and obtain appropriate assurances regarding the commitment of the College of Human Sciences to maintaining and enhancing this course sequence. Right now, the course is taught by an adjunct assistant professor. If the College of Human Sciences is unable to offer a commitment to this course (and the course sequence recommended in Section IV) then the opportunity to offer this course should be offered to another unit on campus such as the proposed Social Justice Institute or the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

We do not believe that other programs now in existence or in the planning stages at the University can offer the level of faculty support and curricular expertise required to continue and expand the course at this time.

### **Recommendation: Need for a Support Network**

The Dialogues on Diversity course sequence cannot succeed if it operates in isolation. We recommend that a support network for the Dialogues on Diversity courses be formed, composed of persons representing actual or potential stakeholders, including (e.g.) academic units such as the Center for American Intercultural Studies, the ISU Social Justice Institute (if it is actualized), Women's

Studies, etc., and various Student Services offices and agencies such as the Ames-ISU YWCA, the Margaret Sloss Women's Center, and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Student Services Office. The purpose of the network would be to increase linkages with related units on campus to avoid duplication, to share resources, to assist in decision making on project funding for community action projects (see Section IV), to provide links to potential community project sites, to assist students to identify opportunities for projects, and to help in identifying guest speakers.

## Section IV: A Second Course

### Observation: Need for a Second Course

The Task Force noted that there is an opportunity to expand the impact of the Dialogues on Diversity course through the creation of a “Dialogues – Part 2”. Undergraduate students must complete three credits to fulfill their US Diversity requirement. University Studies 150 and 160X each provide one credit. As such, together they offer students two of the three required credits.

### Recommendation: Develop a Second Course

The Task force recommends that an additional course be developed. The following reasons apply:

- 1) Student development from “unknowing” to “knowing” may take more time than an eight week course like University Studies 150 or 160X can provide. Students interested in addressing and deconstructing issues of oppression, power, and privilege may need a Part II to continue the process of increased awareness and confidence to impact change.
- 2) Student evaluations in both U ST 150 and 160X indicate an interest in additional learning opportunities to continue to expand their knowledge about and ability to address social justice issues.
- 3) The US diversity requirement is for 3 credits of approved course work. Thus, creating a convenient 3 credit sequence involving either Dialogues on Diversity or Gender Justice plus a 2-credit follow-up course will be attractive to students.

The second course would provide an opportunity for students to apply what they have learned in Dialogues on Diversity and/or Gender Justice. Such a course could be entitled *Dialogues into Action* with the following characteristics:

- 2 credit course
- 200 level course
- U ST 150, U ST 160X (or equivalent experience) as prerequisite
- Emphasis on dialogue at beginning, shifting to emphasis on action/service learning project in second half
- 2 hours/week, full semester course
- The goal of the course is to provide an opportunity for students to apply what they have learned in Dialogues on Diversity or Gender Justice through:
  - Critical inquiry
  - Analytical readings and writing
  - Leadership and social action
  - Action project focused on a campus or community issue

- Possible objectives may include
  - To critically analyze the similarities and differences in experiences across social group memberships.
  - To identify individual and collective actions for interrupting injustices and building alliances to promote greater social justice.
  - To gain knowledge and understanding of the dynamics of difference and dominance at the personal and political levels.
  - To develop skills to work with differences, disagreements and conflicts as opportunities for deeper understanding and transformation.
  - To further develop capacity to dialogue.
  - To develop skills in critical inquiry, writing, and reflection.
  - To develop leadership skills within a social action framework.
  - To acquire knowledge and skills necessary to serve as an ally or campus change agent.
  - To develop program management skills and abilities, including needs assessment, project development, budget development, and program assessment
  - To gain an appreciation and understanding of the complexities and issues associated with creating institutional and cultural change.

### **Recommendation: Resources to Develop the Second Course**

The Task Force recommends that the second course be offered as an experimental course, which, if successful, would ramp up into offering more sections in future years.

In the experimental course phase, the Task Force is recommending that one section of the course be offered starting Spring 2008. The instructors of U ST 150 and U ST 160X have expressed an interest in developing this new two-credit course, provided adequate financial support is received. The support needed during the course development and trial phase would include the following: approximately ¼ release time during Fall semester 2007 for course development, the support of a ½-time graduate student (9-month) to support the service learning aspects of the course, and materials/supplies for the course and service learning projects. The total commitment during the experimental (one course section) would be \$20,000 per year plus release time for course instructors.

When the course is fully developed, it will require additional release time for a course coordinator, additional graduate student assistance (to support service learning projects across multiple sections), and increased material/project support costs. Based on student interest, it is reasonable to expect that up to four sections of this new course could be offered each semester. If the course grows to that level, the total commitment for the course would approach \$80,000.



**Observation: Future Possibilities**

A long-term vision for the Dialogues on Diversity course could include the development of a more comprehensive diversity program. Such a program could optimize the coordination of the 2-course Dialogues sequence, a graduate course on Diversity Leadership, Gender Justice, as well as other similar offerings. A diversity program, given the appropriate faculty leadership, could evolve to include teaching, research and outreach activities.

## **Section V: Optimal Coordination with Other Programs on Campus**

### **Observation: Coordination Across Campus**

In its present form, the Dialogues on Diversity syllabus identifies the need for “linkages to and coordination with other programs” (groups and interests) that cater to, and represent, constituencies relevant to diversity within Iowa State University. The following are identified:

- Committee on Lectures
- Multicultural Student Affairs Office
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Student Services Office
- Margaret Sloss Women’s Center

At present there appears to be only minimal involvement of these groups, and very little evidence of structured coordination. The challenges of diversity cut across, and impact, a broad cross section of the campus community.

### **Recommendation: Engagement Will Strengthen Course Sequence**

In terms of the long-term vision of expanding Dialogues on Diversity, greater efforts are needed to network effectively with other groups. A revised and expanded curriculum should actively engage the following centers, programs and departments that are directly or indirectly involved with issues relevant to diversity:

- Committee on Lectures
- Multicultural Student Affairs Office
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Student Services Office
- Margaret Sloss Women’s Center
- Disability Resources Office
- Center for American Intercultural Studies
- Women Studies
- African American Studies
- Native American Studies
- Asian Studies
- Latino/Latina Studies
- Religious Studies
- Gender Justice (U St 160X)
- Carver Academy
- International Students Association

A few of these programs, such as the Women’s Center, the Carver Academy, and the Center for American Intercultural Studies, offer courses that complement

and advance the vision of the Dialogues on Diversity. Developing stronger ties would ensure that resources and experiences in these other areas significantly augment and enhance the dialogues course. The proposed Social Justice Institute is another important potential partner.

Mutual awareness, social justice, celebration of differences, and effective inter-cultural communication require dialogue with constituencies susceptible to racism and intolerance. Students and faculty in these other agencies are invaluable resources for guest lectures, mentoring and training of facilitators, and experiential contextualization. We cannot achieve the kind of society that Dialogues on Diversity envisages solely by engaging students in an isolated classroom environment. Neither is an understanding of the dynamics and complex intersections of race/ethnicity, class and gender possible within such a narrow context. Active engagement of diverse elements of the broader college environment is necessary in order to transform the entrenched culture of ignorance and intolerance.

Such broadening would:

- Strengthen the program by enhancing awareness of both the complexity and depth of racism and intolerance
- Expand institutional structures for engaging racism and intolerance
- Reassure students and faculty of broader institutional support for and commitment to diversity, thus assuring optimal impact
- Facilitate incorporation of diversity into the curriculum
- Enhance the visibility of diversity as a campus-wide ethos
- Expand the boundaries of safe and welcoming environments on campus.